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Writes to Smathers, Goldwater

Cuba Story Muzzled. Air Force Colonel Says

By STEPHEN TRUMBULL
Herold Staff Writer

An Air Force colonel now in retirement here charged Friday that he was muzzled in an attempt to tell fellow officers the true story of the Cuban invasion fiasco — even in the privacy of a closed-door conference.

But he said he did not blame only Richard N. Goodwin, the 30-year-old aide of President Kennedy who was sworn in Thursday as deputy assistant secretary of state for Inter-American Affairs.

The colonel is Fred D. Stevens, who was the last air attaché at the U.S. embassy in Havana. He flew out the final records from there, and later operated a hush-hush Air Force office here to help anti-Castro activities.

Now living at 9401 SW 61st Ct., he made his charges in letters to Sens. George Smathers and Barry Goldwater.

He denied an earlier quotation that had him blaming Goodwin for the fact that his scheduled briefing of other air attaches at a Caribbean Command meeting in Panama last June was abruptly called off and that he was "muzzled."

But he did confirm the statement that after his office here was abruptly closed he and an assistant were ordered to Washington "at Mr. Goodwin's request." He was away on leave at the time and could not be reached.

He said his assistant, Maj. Robert Van Horn (since transferred to Mexico) went to Washington and cooled his heels in a sort of "outer-office house arrest" for three weeks. "He said that during that time Major Van Horn



Richard N. Goodwin
... aide to Kennedy

was questioned only once by Goodwin, "and then very briefly."

Col. Stevens said it was also shortly after this that he received a form notice calling his attention to his approaching eligibility for retirement.

"But I can't say flatly that this was inspired by this affair," he said.

In support of his charge of wide bungling in failing to give full support to anti-Castro Cubans both before, during and after the ill-fated April invasion attempt, the colonel said:

"With only a modest effort on our part in either the early stage, the middle or latter part, a complete victory could have been gained for Cubans, the U.S. and freedom loving people everywhere."

He said that well before the April invasion there were enough non-Castro Cubans in the Escambray mountains to have formed the basis for a counter-revolution. He said that "support was the only limiting factor."

"The insurgency grew

(there)" he said. "By December Castro was scared. He wasn't going to win by fighting. He never had."

"Then, somehow, and inexplicably, the word came to let the Escambray dry up... support of these insurgents may be wrong... there may be criminal elements there... you wouldn't want another Batista, would you?"

"The United States-controlled camps in the Air Force support for the liberation faltered, and such missions as were allowed were planned to fail."

"The airplanes were there. The supplies were there. The dedicated Cuban crews were there — willing to give their lives to strike a blow for freedom, as they proved later in April."

"But the missions were pinched off, all for 'good and sufficient reasons.'"

"The morale of the Cuban patriots in the camps was broken. They deserted and defected. The starveling remnants (of this action) struggled and fought their way out of the Escambray in February and March."

The colonel did not name a CIA official he said once called his Miami office "and said he had received word from Washington for our office to stop talking to Cubans or our careers would be forfeited."